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# THE KEY TO THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE.

A DISQUISITION ON MR. EDWARD DOUGLAS  
FAWCETT'S PHILOSOPHY.

MONADOLOGY is a philosophical system based upon a psychological hypothesis that is now almost universally regarded as antiquated. Its greatest representatives were Leibnitz and Herbart, but there are only a few disciples of Herbart now left in Germany, among whom O. Flügel and Ed. Dillmann<sup>1</sup> are the most active and best known, while in England a new and able champion of monadology has arisen in the person of Mr. E. Douglas Fawcett.

That a theory is considered antiquated is no reason why it should not be revised and tried again, but the trouble with monadology is that it renders the facts for whose explanation it is invented, more mysterious and complicated than they naturally are. The problem is solved at the sacrifice of a number of new problems, the solution of which is a hopeless task, and the sole comfort lies in the consideration that having transcended the boundary line of physics, we are moving in the fairy-tale realm of metaphysics, where physical experiment and proof is dispensed with and speculation can be indulged in without fear of the pruning-hook of criticism.

Mr. Fawcett is a scholar who is well read in the history of philosophy; his command of language is excellent, and some of the new terms which he has invented are very forcible. But the abler the defence the more obvious becomes the gratuitousness of the monad-

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<sup>1</sup> See O. Flügel, *Die Seelenfrage*, and Ed. Dillmann, *Darstellung der Monadenlehre*.

ological assumptions. Indeed, the theory need only be worked out in detail to reveal the fallacies of its complicated metaphysical apparatus, and any student of the system, except perhaps its own inventor and some of his most ardent disciples, will lose confidence in the practicability of the scheme.

Among the arguments which are supposed to buttress the theory of monadology the strongest one is said to be found in the testimony furnished by our workaday consciousness. A subject is posited as the ground, source, and sustainer of our fugitive states of consciousness. Mr. Fawcett argues :

"No subject, no flux of sensations in time ; no subject, no order of sensations in space ; no subject, no memory, no expectation ; no subject, no introspection ; no subject, no explicit I-reference."—*Riddle of the Universe*, p. 265.

The subject is described as a monad, i. e., "a unitary individual centre of consciousness, actual or potential." (P. 337.)

Monads are described as atomic, and the chemical atoms appear to be monads of a lower order. The subject is the central monad in man's organism ; for there are also "ganglionic monads" and "a variety of states separately present in separate monads are mirrored as united in the glassy essence of the subject" (p. 314).

The monads, however, although called the well-springs of reality, have themselves sprung from a universal subject which is the impersonal *prius* of existence and the ground of all reality whatever. This *prius* is neither conscious nor unconscious, but metaconscious, whatever that may mean, and in it "individuals can hang side by side without mixing."

The sciences, especially physics, chemistry, and psychology, will have to be rethought from the standpoint of the metaphysics of monadology ; such "well-attested phenomena," as clairvoyance, thought-transference, and telepathy, which bewilder a materialistic science, fit in easily with Mr. Fawcett's doctrine, and new light is promised on old problems, especially in the domain of evolution. Mr. Fawcett says :

"The universe is made up of individuals of various grades, its development is the expression of their development, and this, again, rests on their mutual further-

ances and hindrances as variously related. This necessary change of relations is the key to the riddle. . . . *The humblest atom-monad undergoes a ceaseless palingenesis.* When hydrogen-monads 'combine,' as we say, with oxygen-monads as  $H_2O$ , they have *special overt states* answering to these special relations; when, again, they occur in  $H_2SO_4$ , they have *other overt states*. Now, *these two sets of states of the hydrogen monad answer to what for the human Monad would be two life-dreams, or two separate 'rebirths,' and the known shift of its relations is Palingenesis on the lowest level.* Not only, therefore, can palingenesis be deduced from the doctrine of the Metaconscious, but in the case of the *lower* monads it can, also, to a great extent, be experimentally verified.

"Save in respect of *complexity*, Palingenesis, as here conceived, is exactly the same affair for the higher human monad as it is for an atom of hydrogen—a change of the relations of monads. We are thus led to regard the universe as in last resort an aggregate of palingenetic individuals, the unfolding of which constitutes the Evolution of Deity."

The difficulty over which Mr. Fawcett stumbles is the problem of the origin of the ego-perception, which appears to him as the condition of the continuity that obtains in memory and forms the basis of our personality. He is more materialistic than he is aware of himself. He attempts to think the conditions of psychical unity as an actual being and endows it with a kind of substantial existence, which, however, in order to escape the absurdities of his materialistic procedure, he makes as small as possible, only preserving its indivisibility and individuality. The result is his belief in monads.

Mr. Fawcett will find that the problem of memory lies at the basis of the problem of personality, and psychical continuity is nothing but the preservation of form in the flux of metabolic changes taking place in a sentient organism. No subject-assumption is needed to explain the I-reference, nor to explain the recollection of past experiences or future expectations. A rational explanation of memory renders Mr. Fawcett's monadology redundant.

If our skin be cut, the wound will heal ere long; but a scar will be left, and the scar preserves the exact form of the wound. The material particles which constitute the skin are renovated again and again, but in all this flux of matter the form of the cut is preserved. Should, however, the atmosphere be charged with those abnormal tensions which prognosticate rapid changes in the weather, the irritation may be felt in the scar and may reproduce a weak repetition

of the pain of the old wound ; and no subject is needed to explain the phenomenon.

The evolution of organised life is a product of memory. Sentient substance reacts upon its surroundings and every reaction leaves a trace which is preserved, and which by repetition develops into an organ. Thus function creates the various forms of life which we call the souls of sentient beings, and the preservation of form means the preservation of soul.

Form is generally looked upon as a nonentity, but it is the form of a thing which makes it what it is. Form is the most essential part of reality, and the preservation of form means the immortality of life.

The key to the riddle of the universe lies in a correct comprehension of the nature of form. It is not accidental that the formal sciences (mathematics, arithmetic, logic, and pure natural science, which latter propounds and explains such truths as causality and the law of the conservation of matter and energy) are the mental tools of the scientist. Formal laws are always the ultimate explanations, and more mysteries are revealed by measuring and counting, which constitute the main methods of the sciences, than by monadological speculations. A correct comprehension of the nature of form, including a recognition of both the reality of form, and the sweeping importance of its preservation, which implies the immortality of the soul, will enable us to dispense with all materialistic theories of psychical and mental phenomena, it will teach us a spiritual conception of spiritual truths and throw light upon the great problems of life which confront us in problems of ethics and religion.

EDITOR.